

Essential Steps for a Professional Dental Cleaning*

1. Perform an oral evaluation, charting the findings on an 8.5 x 11" medical record.
2. Radiograph the entire mouth.
3. Scale the teeth supra- and subgingivally using a hand scaler or an appropriate powered device followed by a scaler or curette.
4. Polish the teeth using a low-speed hand piece running at no more than 300 rpm with prophylaxis paste from a disposable cup individual for each patient.
5. Perform subgingival irrigation to remove debris and polishing paste along with inspection of both subgingival and coronal surfaces.
6. Examine and rinse the oral cavity; remove any packing or debris.
7. Apply antiplaque substances, such as sealants.
8. Provide instructions to the owner regarding home oral hygiene.

*NOTE: This can only be performed under general anesthesia. Additional steps for periodontal therapy and other conditions can be found in the 2013 AAHA Dental Care Guidelines for Dogs and Cats.

Minimum Protective Devices for Staff

- Cap or hair bonnet
- Mask
- Goggles, surgical spectacles or face shield
- Smock
- Gloves
- Earplugs
- Dosimeter as required by individual state laws
- Protection from radiation (e.g., lead shield) as required by individual state laws


Frequency of Dental Procedures Under Anesthesia

- Every 12 months for pets with healthy mouths
- Every 6 months for pets with gingivitis
- Every 3–6 months for pets with periodontitis
- Every month for pets with advanced periodontal disease until the disease is controlled

Instruments To Include in the Dental Surgical Pack*

- Scalers
- Curettes
- Probes/explorer
- Sharpening materials
- Scalpel
- Extraction equipment
- Thumb forceps
- Hemostats
- Iris, LaGrange, Mayo or Metzenbaum scissors
- Needle holders
- Mouth mirror
- Retraction aid

*Instruments must be sterilized by accepted techniques prior to each use. Hand instruments must be properly sharpened and cared for.



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About AAHA—The American Animal Hospital Association is an international organization of nearly 6,000 veterinary care teams comprising more than 48,000 veterinary professionals committed to excellence in companion animal care. Established in 1933, AAHA is recognized for its leadership in the profession, its high standards for pet health care, and most important, its accreditation of companion animal practices. For more information about AAHA, visit aahanet.org.



This implementation toolkit was developed by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) to provide information for practitioners regarding dental care for dogs and cats. The information contained in this toolkit should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment or procedure, nor is it intended to be an AAHA standard of care. This implementation toolkit is supported by generous educational grants from Hill's Pet Nutrition, Merial, PDX BioTech, and Virbac Animal Health.